

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Friday, December 2, 2016

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Community Organizations & Labor Leaders Call on Chairman Mendelson to Renounce “Moratorium”

On the eve of a Trump administration and Republican-controlled Congress, D.C. Council Chairman shockingly announces refusal to consider further progressive legislation.

Washington, D.C. – Community organizations and labor unions applaud the news that the Universal Paid Leave Act will move to a vote in the D.C. Council on December 6th and look forward to it passing by the end of the year. But in announcing a revised proposal of the legislation on Tuesday, D.C. Council Chairman Phil Mendelson [buried a brief and shocking statement](#) at the end of his press release. Seemingly to placate businesses that “may be unhappy that this bill establishes a new tax on them,” the Chairman said he will “support a two-year moratorium on the adoption of similar bills, such as mandating scheduling requirements or nurse staffing ratios in hospitals.”

Various community organizations and labor unions that advocate for and represent working people across the District were stunned and deeply concerned to see the Chairman make such an unprecedented statement.

Elizabeth Falcon, Executive Director of DC Jobs With Justice, called Chairman Mendelson’s statement “the opposite of the leadership we need in this new era.” She said, “The Council will improve the lives of thousands of District residents when it passes Paid Family Leave. But that alone is not enough to have a good life in the District. Workers already face barriers to enough work, dignified working conditions, and opportunities for real careers. And what new issues will emerge over the next two years? Abandoning the Council’s responsibility to ensure those basic needs is shocking to us.”

Kimberly Mitchell, a Ward 7 resident and retail worker, said, “My bills don’t stop for two years. My family’s needs don’t stop for two years. My neighbors can’t stop worrying about being pushed out for two years. Why should the Chairman stop doing his job for two years?”

Jacob Feinspan, Executive Director of Jews United for Justice and a key advocate of the paid family leave bill, said, “we were disappointed that Mr. Mendelson introduced a revised paid family leave bill that falls far short of the real needs of District residents by cutting out medical leave, and it is further troubling that he would threaten to prevent future action on commonsense measures to help the District’s working families.”

Carlos Jimenez, Executive Director of the Metropolitan Washington Council, AFL-CIO, said the Metro Council is “extremely concerned that there has been a reference to a moratorium on future economic legislation that would benefit working families, including discussions on safe staffing ratios and fair scheduling practices.” However, “today we’re focused on winning passage of paid leave. Skyrocketing inequality and new threats from the incoming administration mean our elected officials must do even more for working people, not less. Paid Family Leave is a huge step forward, but the Council’s work does not end there.”

Carol Joyner, Director for the Labor Project for Working Families, said, “We live a “tale of two cities” reality in DC and a moratorium on improvements to job quality only legislates that reality. UPLA as currently proposed already has significant concessions to big business: most notably, the lack of

coverage for one's own medical care and the narrow definition of family. These concessions along with a moratorium will only exacerbate the race and ethnic disparities in our city."

Valerie Ervin of the Working Families Party underscored the need to double down and not back away from fighting for a more inclusive and just Washington, D.C. "Now more than ever we need the chairman and the D.C. Council to lead by example. In the era of Trump, when working people will come under an unprecedented assault, we cannot afford to leave families behind. We must reject the Chairman's zero sum mentality and recognize that we can only thrive as a community when everyone has a chance to succeed."

Ellen Bravo, Executive Director of Family Values at Work, said, "While we commend Chair Mendelson and the DC Council for the introduction of UPLA, we are deeply concerned to hear the Chair call for a moratorium on other actions that will help the District's overworked, underpaid residents. Paid family and medical leave is critical for all workers, as are predictable schedules, fair wages, and high quality health care. The District has an opportunity to be a leader in the nation for all workers, especially the most disenfranchised. We need a Council that will be there for all DC residents, regardless of their ward, wealth, or working status."

Mark Federici, President of UFCW Local 400, said, "Day in and day out, the men and women of UFCW Local 400 work hard to meet the needs of shoppers in the District's grocery and retail stores. It's deeply disappointing to learn that the Chairman of the D.C. Council refuses to work just as hard to meet their needs."

Reverend Graylan S. Hagler of Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ said, "On the eve of a new administration that promises to champion countless attacks on hardworking families, it's utterly shocking that the chairman would promise to halt all progressive legislation in the District for the first two years of the Trump presidency."

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You can find Chairman Mendelson's statement [here](#).